What was the Cold War?

The [Cold War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/coldwar.htm) is the name given to the relationship that developed primarily between the USA and the [USSR](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1917_to_1939.htm) after [World War Two](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/index.htm). The [Cold War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/coldwar.htm) was to dominate international affairs for decades and many major crises occurred - the [Cuban Missile Crisis](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/cuba.htm), [Vietnam](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/vietnam.htm), [Hungary](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/hungary_1956.htm) and the [Berlin Wall](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/berlinwall.htm) being just some. For many the growth in weapons of [mass destruction](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/nuclear_arms_race.htm) was the most worrying issue.

So what exactly was the [Cold War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/coldwar.htm)?

In diplomatic terms there are three types of war.

In diplomatic terms there are three types of war.

**Hot War :** this is actual warfare. All talks have failed and the armies are fighting.

**Warm War :** this is where talks are still going on and there would always be a chance of a peaceful outcome but armies, navies etc. are being fully mobilised and war plans are being put into operation ready for the command to fight.

**Cold War :** this term is used to describe the relationship between America and the Soviet Union 1945 to 1980. Neither side ever fought the other - the consequences would be too appalling - but they did ‘fight’ for their beliefs using **client states** who fought for their beliefs on their behalf e.g. In [Afghanistan](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/afghanistan.htm), the Americans supplied the rebel Afghans after the Soviet Union invaded in 1979 while they never physically involved themselves thus avoiding a direct clash with the Soviet Union.

**The one time this process nearly broke down was the** [**Cuban  Missile Crisis**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/cuba.htm)**.**

So why were these two super powers so distrustful of the other?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **America** | **Soviet Union** |
| **Free elections** | **No elections or fixed** |
| **Democratic** | **Autocratic / Dictatorship** |
| **Capitalist** | **Communist** |
| **‘Survival of the fittest’** | **Everybody helps everybody** |
| **Richest world power** | **Poor economic base** |
| **Personal freedom** | **Society controlled by the NKVD (secret police)** |
| **Freedom of the media** | **Total censorship** |

This lack of mutually understanding an alien culture, would lead the world down a very dangerous path - [Berlin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/berlin.htm), [Korea](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/korea.htm), the [Arms](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/nuclear_arms_race.htm) [Race](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/nuclear_arms_race.htm), [Hungary](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/hungary_1956.htm), [Cuba](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/cuba.htm), [Vietnam](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/vietnam.htm). It also lead to the development of weapons of awesome destructive capability and the creation of some intriguing policies such as MAD - Mutually Assured Destruction.

Causes of the Cold War in 1945

**\* American fear of communist attack**

**\* Truman’s dislike of** [**Stalin**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm)

**\* Russia’s fear of the American's atomic bomb**

**\* Russia’s dislike of capitalism**

**\* Russia’s actions in the** [**Soviet zone of Germany**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/berlin.htm)

**\* America’s refusal to share nuclear secrets**

**\* Russia’s expansion west into Eastern Europe + broken election promises**

**\* Russia’s fear of American attack**

**\* Russia’s need for a secure western border**

**\* Russia’s aim of spreading world communism**

**This feeling of suspicion lead to mutual distrust and this did a great deal to deepen the** [**Cold War**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/coldwar.htm)

Cold War chronology

**1945 : ‘A’-Bomb dropped on** [**Hiroshima**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/index.htm) **+** [**Nagasaki**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/index.htm)**. USA ahead in the arms race.**

**1947 : Marshall Aid to the west of Europe.** [**Stalin**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm) **of USSR refused it for Eastern Europe.**

**1948 : start of the** [**Berlin Blockade**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/berlin.htm) **- ended in 1949**

**1949 : NATO established; USSR exploded her first ‘A’-bomb;** [**China**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/china_1900_to_1976.htm) **becomes communist**

**1950 :** [**Korean War**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/korea.htm) **started.**

**1952 : USA exploded her first hyrogen bomb.**

**1953 :** [**Korean War**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/korea.htm) **ended. USSR exploded her first hydrogen bomb.** [**Stalin**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm) **died.**

**1955 : Warsaw Pact created. ‘Peaceful coexistence’ called for.**

**1956 :** [**Hungary**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/hungary_1956.htm) **revolts against USSR.** [**Suez Crisis**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/suez.htm)**.**

**1957 : Sputnik launched.**

**1959 :** [**Cuba**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/cuba.htm) **becomes a communist state.**

**1961 : Military aid sent to** [**Vietnam**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/vietnam.htm) **by USA for the first time.** [**Berlin Wall**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/berlinwall.htm) **built.**

**1962 :** [**Cuban Missile Crisis.**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/cuba.htm)

**1963 : Huge increase of American aid to** [**Vietnam**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/vietnam.htm)**.**

**1965 : USA openly involved in** [**Vietnam**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/vietnam.htm)**.**

**1967 :** [**Six-Day War**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/six_day_war_1967.htm) **in Middle East.**

**1968 : USSR invades Czechoslovakia.**

**1973 :** [**Yom Kippur War**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/yom_kippur_war_of_1973.htm)**.**

**1979 : USSR invaded** [**Afghanistan**](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/afghanistan.htm)**.**

**1986 : Meeting in Iceland between USSR (Gorbachev) and USA (Reagan).**

**1987 : INF Treaty signed.**

Europe in 1945 – long notes

Europe by the summer of 1945 was very different to the Europe that had started out on [war](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/index.htm) in September 1939. The Allies ([USA](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/america_1918.htm), Britain and France) had started to fall out with [Stalin’s](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm) [Russia](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1917_to_1939.htm) during the war itself. [Stalin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm) had wanted the Allies to start a second front in 1943. This, the Allies claimed, was not possible. Stalin got it into his mind that the Allies were deliberately allowing [Russia](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1917_to_1939.htm) to take on the might of two-thirds of the Wehrmacht in eastern Europe. Such a military campaign, he believed, would leave the USSR so weakened once the war was over that the Allies would have major military superiority over Russia almost immediately hostilities ceased.

This distrust also came out in the meetings that were held during the war. At Casablanca, Yalta and Potsdam, the one thing that clearly united the Allies and Russia was a common enemy - Nazi Germany. Little else did unite them. In fact, Stalin was not invited to Casablanca which increased his belief that the Allies were planning things behind his back. The Casablanca meeting only concerned the western front, so there was no need to invite Stalin. However, Stalin interpreted this differently.

The three war leaders - Churchill, [Roosevelt](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/f_d_roosevelt.htm) and [Stalin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm) - did meet at Yalta in February 1945. They agreed on the following:

The people freed from Nazi rule in Europe should be allowed to set up their own democratic and independent governments. Germany should be divided into four zones at the end of the war. USA, [USSR](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1917_to_1939.htm), GB and France would occupy one zone each. [Berlin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/berlin.htm) would also be divided into four sections for the Allies. Half the $20 billions that would be collected from Germany as reparations would go to Russia. The eastern part of Poland would go to Russia so that Russia could build up her defences. Land would be taken from eastern Germany and given to Poland in compensation. Russian forces would be used against Japan in the Far East. A [United Nations](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/united_nations1.htm) would be set up to promote world peace.

A key issue at Yalta was how to treat those nations that had been under Nazi occupation. It became clear to the Allies, that Stalin’s idea of free and democratic governments was different to theirs. In Stalin’s mind a free and democratic government should be subordinate to Moscow and have pro-Russian people in power so that those nations should do as Moscow wished. There was little that the Allies could do as the huge Red Army advanced west across eastern Europe towards Berlin. By 1945, the Red Army was a well equipped and well lead army and getting very used to victory.

By May 1945, the month of [Nazi Germany’s](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/index.htm) surrender, the Red Army and therefore Moscow, effectively controlled the bulk of eastern Europe. Initially, the people of Roumania, Bulgaria and Hungary saw the Red Army as their liberators. But the murder of anti-Moscow politicians soon tainted their new found freedom. The death of [Roosevelt](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/f_d_roosevelt.htm) lead to Harry Truman becoming American president. He was far less sympathetic to Russia than Roosevelt had been. He was also president of a country armed with a new and fearsome weapon - the atomic bomb.

After the Nazi surrender, the Allies and Russia met at Potsdam, a suburb of Berlin. They discussed what to do with the newly surrendered Germany. Half-way through the conference, Winston Churchill was replaced with the new British prime minister Clement Atlee, the leader of the Labour Party. Despite the celebrations of victory, a number of issues were not fully addressed at Potsdam. There was a failure to re-confirm the promise made at Yalta - of free and independent elections in eastern Europe. The new border between Poland and Germany was also missed out.

[Stalin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm) was also told at Potsdam about America’s new weapon. However, very little information was given to him. When the atomic bombs were used on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it became clear to Stalin that Russia was years behind [America](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/america_1918.htm) in terms of modern weaponry. Though the Red Army was huge, its tanks some of the most modern in the world and its air force as good as any, this new weapon made all this conventional power of less value.

By the end of 1945, the seeds of the [Cold War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/coldwar.htm) had been well and truly sown. Both sides were no longer linked by a common enemy. One side had massive conventional forces while the other had an unknown number of atomic bombs which could be used against Moscow - as Stalin knew.

1945-50

Between 1945 and 1950, Europe was the focal point for the [Cold War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/coldwar.htm), and in particular, the city of [Berlin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/berlin.htm) with the [Berlin Airlift](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/berlin.htm). What went on in Berlin seemed to confirm all the fears held by the west about Communism and the rule of [Joseph Stalin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm).

By the end of the [Second World War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/index.htm), Russia had put what was effectively a barrier around herself. To the west, the promises made in the war meetings by Stalin had been broken. There were no free elections and communist governments were imposed on all east European nations except Yugoslavia. To Stalin, his acts were justifiable as no nation in Europe had suffered the devastation that Russia had done as a result of the [Nazi](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/index.htm) occupation - therefore he wanted a protective barrier around him so that any future war that might break out would lead to destruction in places other than Russia. To him there had been free elections in eastern Europe.........as long as the communists won.

**Poland**: in this country, non-communist leaders had been killed. There was already great anger in Poland for the Russians as they had stayed outside of Warsaw during the uprising [of 1944](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/index.htm) and failed to help those in the city when they could easily have done so. In 1947, there was a sham of an election in which the communists won 400 out of 450 seats. These communists were hand-picked people loyal to Moscow.

**Hungary**: the most popular political party was the Small Farmers Party - a comment on the size of their farms! In the election held in this country, the communists got 17% of the votes while the SFP won with a large majority. The communists filled all the important political positions in Budapest while the SFP leaders left politics. Clearly, they felt that if they had stayed in politics, then their lives would have been at risk - or their families as well.

**Rumania**: there was an election in November 1946. The communists won.

**Bulgaria**: non-communist leaders were killed and in October 1946, the communists won a massive victory.

**Yugoslavia** : this country was to become a problem for [Stalin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm). The people of Yugoslavia had no wish to replace the Nazis with the rule of Stalin. They were lead by Tito - a wartime guerilla leader who was idolised in his country. In the November 1946 election, Tito and his Peoples Party won 96% of the votes. With such support, not even Stalin felt confident enough to overthrow Tito. Yugoslavia also had an extensive coastline in the Mediterranean Sea and America would not have tolerated Russia having instant access to the Mediterranean. With Yugoslavia communist but independent of Moscow's domination, Stalin's southern naval fleet was still effectively trapped in the Black Sea and any movement to the Mediterranean could be easily detected in Turkey. In 1946, Stalin could not afford to provoke America as the latter still had atomic supremacy.

**Greece** : in this country, the majority of the people were pro-monarchy (70%) and an attempted takeover of Greece by the communists lasted for four years (1946 to 1949) but ultimately failed. This problem in Greece was to lead to Harry Truman's famous **"Truman Doctrine"**.

Stalin's grip on eastern Europe was all but total. His secret police was thorough in its search for opponents and the control Stalin had in this region lead to Winston Churchill's famous comment at a speech in Fulton:

|  |
| --- |
| **"From Stettin in the north to Trieste in the south, an iron curtain has descended over Europe."** |

However, eastern Europe's strategic value to the west was minimal and her help to these countries was small. [Stalin](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/Stalin.htm) could not afford to provoke America as she had the A-bomb. However, all this changed in 1949 when Russia exploded her first A-bomb. America had predicted that she had 10 years supremacy over the Russians - spies in the American atomic research centre in Los Alamos meant that their supremacy lasted but five years.

**Cold War Revision – recap and more**

A war short of full scale war because of the development of the Atomic bomb.

**CAUSES OF THE COLD WAR [BARE]**

1. **Beliefs**: Russia was a Communist country, ruled by a dictator who cared little about human rights.

America was a capitalist democracy, which valued freedom.

1. **Aims**: Stalin wanted reparations from Germany/ a buffer of friendly states.

Britain and the USA [led by President Truman] wanted to help Germany recover/ to prevent large areas of Europe from coming under Communist control.

1. **Resentment about history:** The USSR did not trust Britain and the USA – They had tried to destroy the Russian Revolution in 1918/ Stalin thought they had not helped the USSR enough in WW2.

Britain & USA did not trust USSR – Stalin had signed the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939.

1. **Events** turned the mistrust into war: Yalta/ Potsdam/ Salami tactics/ Fulton/ Greece/ Truman Doctrine/ Marshall Plan/ Cominform/ Czechoslovakia

**YALTA Conference** (February 1945)

1. Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt agreed to Divide Germany into 4 zones (France, Britain, USA, USSR)/ to hold free elections in Eastern European countries./ to set up the United Nations./ to set up a government of Communists and non Communists in Poland.
2. On the surface, everything seemed friendly, but there was tension behind the scenes

**POTSDAM Conference** (July 1945)

1. At Potsdam the tensions surfaced.
2. Stalin, Truman and Atlee agreed to bring Nazi war criminals to trial/ divide Germany into 4 occupied zones.
3. There were disagreements over Soviet policy in Poland./ The size of German reparations.

**SALAMI TACTICS (**1945–48) ‘Slice-by-slice’, Stalin ensured all E Eur.countries had Communist govts

1. Albania (1945) – the Communists took power after the war without opposition
2. Bulgaria (1945) – the Communists executed the leaders of all the other parties.
3. Poland (1947) – the Communists forced the non-Communist leaders into exile.
4. Hungary (1947) – Russian troops stayed / Stalin allowed elections (non-communists won a big majority)/ Communists led by the pro-Russian Rakosi./ Rakosi demanded that groups which opposed him should be banned./ He got control of the police, and arrested his opponents./ He set up a secret police unit, the AVH.
5. Romania (1945–1947) – the Communists gradually took over control.
6. Czechoslovakia (1948) – the Communists banned all other parties/ killed their leaders.
7. East Germany (1949) – Russians turned their zone into German Democratic Republic.

**EVENTS 1946–1948**

1. **Fulton speech** (March 1946)

* Churchill described the Soviet bloc as an ‘iron curtain’ –Stalin believed this was necessary to maintain the safety of the USSR.
* After Fulton, the Cold War worsened. Russia called the speech a declaration of war.

1. **Greece** (February 1947)

* US supplied arms and money to defeat the Communists.

1. **Truman Doctrine (**March 1947) – The USA implemented a policy of ‘containment**’** towards the USSR – to prevent Communism spreading any further.
2. **Marshall Plan** (June 1947) – Marshall believed poverty was a breeding ground for Communism. American introduced ‘Marshall Aid’ – $17 billion to get Europe’s economy going.
   1. **Cominform** (October 1947) – Stalin forbade Communist countries to accept Marshall Aid. (October 1947) Cominform was set up to control all Communist countries in Europe.
   2. **Czechoslovakia** (February 1948) – Communists took control

Panicked the US Senate into granting Marshall Aid (31 March 1948)

**THE BERLIN BLOCKADE**

1. **Causes [CABAN]**

* **C**old War was beginning to bite – created tension.
* **A**ims – USA+UK wanted Germany to recover/ Stalin looting German industrial capacity.
* **B**izonia – USA, UK, France merged zones – became more prosperous than the Soviet.
* **A**merican Aid – Marshall Aid was voted 31 March 1948.
* **N**ew Currency –Britain and America introduced new currency – destabilised the East German economy. Stalin said that this was the cause of the blockade.

1. **Events** – (24 June 1948) – Stalin closed rail + road links to Berlin / Lasted 11 months/ Allies airlifted supplies to Berlin – 275,000 flights, 1.5m tons/ In winter, Berliners lived on dried eggs and potatoes/ 4 hours of electricity a day./ US had B29 bombers on standby./ (12 May 1949) – Stalin re-opened the borders.
2. **Results [CENA**]

* **C**old War got worse.
* **E**ast/West Germany: German Democratic Republic/ Federal Republic of Germany.
* **N**ATO and Warsaw Pact – NATO (1949) defensive alliance against USSR/ Warsaw Pact 1955 by Russia
* **A**rms Race. The USA and USSR competed for world domination.

**KOREAN WAR**  (North Korea [Communist] invaded South Korea [Capitalist])

1. **Causes [DUCKS]**

* **D**omino theory – Truman thought that Far Eastern countries would fall like dominoes. China Communist (1949). Truman feared Japan would follow.
* **U**ndermine Communism – The National Security Council recommended (NSC 68 – April 1950) abandoning containment to ‘roll back’ Communism.
* **C**old War – America & Russia for world domination – Korea a ‘war at arm’s length’.
* **K**im Il Sung – got Stalin’s and Mao tse Tung’s agreement to attack South Korea.
* **S**yngman Rhee (1950) – boasted he would attack North Korea – gave an excuse.

1. **Events**

* By June 1950 – the NKPA captured most of South Korea from the ROKs.
* July 1950 – UN troops (Americans led by MacArthur), drove the Communists back to the Chinese border.
* October 1950 – China attacked/ drove the Americans back/ advanced into South Korea.
* March 1950 – American reinforcements drove back Chinese (200,000 dead). Truman told the troops to stop t the 38th parallel. Truman sacked MacArthur for criticising his orders.
* 1953 – Truce: America claimed successful containment.

# KHRUSHCHEV succeeded Stalin.

# It seemed he would bring a thaw in the Cold War – He advocated ‘Peaceful Coexistence’/ He met Western leaders at summit meetings/ He was friendly to Yugoslavia, telling Tito there were ‘different roads to Communism’/ He criticised Stalin, executed Beria, set free political prisoners and de-stalinised the eastern bloc countries.

1. In fact 1955–1963 was the time of greatest tension in the Cold War

* Khrushchev used Russian troops when countries tried to leave Russian control.
* By peaceful co-existence, Khrushchev meant ‘peaceful competition’ (He loved to argue (Kitchen debate with Nixon)/ He gave economic aid to countries like Afghanistan and Burma/ Space Race (1957: Sputnik. 1961: Yuri Gagarin orbits the earth)/ Arms Race (1953: Russia got the hydrogen bomb)
  + Warsaw Pact (1955) – USSR/ Albania/ Bulgaria/ Czechoslovakia/ E Germany/ Hungary/ Poland/ Romania

1. In retaliation, in America McCarthy conducted a ‘witchhunt’ for Communists/ In 1955, NATO agreed to an army of 0.5 m men in W Germany/ rushed to put a man on the moon/ American U2 planes spied on Russia

**Hungary (1956)**

1. **Causes:**

* Poverty – When most of Hungary’s food was sent to Russia
* Russian Control – The Hungarians were very patriotic/ They hated censorship, the AVH, and Russian control of education./ They hated having Russian troops stationed in Hungary
* Catholic Church – Communism tried to destroy religion, but Hungarians were Catholics
* Help from the West – The Hungarians thought Esienhower or UN would help.
* Destalinisation –Led to protests against Rakosi’s harsh government.
* **Events** (3 key dates)
* 23 October – Student riots – attcks on AVH and Russian troops
* 24 October – 3 November – Reforming government led by Imre Nagy (Democracy/ Freedom of speech/ Freedom of religion/ Aimed to withdraw from Warsaw Pact.
* 4 November – Soviets sent 1000 tanks to crush/ Western powers protested but didn’t want a war.

1. **Results**

Janos Kadar put in control of Hungary/ 4,000 Hungarians killed/ Nagy shot./ 200,000 Hungarians flee to West./ Many westerners leave the Communist party./ Russia stays in control in Eastern Europe./ Western leaders all the more determined to ‘contain’ communism.

**U2 Crisis**

1 May 1960 Soviets shot down American U2 spy plane over USSR, and captured pilot Gary Powers./ Americans had to admit he was a spy./ Khrushchev demanded apology + end to spy flights./ Eisenhower refused.

**Results**

Khrushchev walks out of Paris summit (14 May 1960)/ Eisenhower’s planned visit to Russia cancelled/ Khrushchev demands US leaves West Berlin/ Americans came off badly – been caught lying- propaganda victory for USSR./ New American president Kennedy promises to get tough on Communism.

# Berlin Wall

# Causes

# Growing tension (U2 crisis/ Kennedy finances anti-Communist forces in Laos and Vietnam)

* **Refugees** (West Berlin enjoyed much higher standard than East Berlin./ 1945 –1960 3 million people crossed the border – a propaganda point for the US – most were skilled workers)

# Sabotage –The Russians claimed that America used West Berlin for spies and sabotage in east Germany..

# Events

# 13 August 1961– East Germans erected a barbed wire wall overnight (later stone)/ All East – West movement was stopped./ Wall fortified with barbed wire and guns./Western powers could do nothing.

**Cuban Missile Crisis**

1. **Causes**

* Superpower tension – U2 – Berlin Wall – Laos – Vietnam
* Fidel Castro’s Cuba – only 90 miles off coast of America./ Close relationship with USSR (oil, machinery and money in return for sugar)/ Cuba nationalises American companies
* Bay of Pigs – (April 1961) America sent in rebels in but they were defeated (a humiliation).
* Missile bases – 14 October 1962: USA U2 spy planes photographs Soviet missile sites on Cuba.

1. **Events**

* Kennedy ordered a naval blockade and threatened invasion.
* For 10 days the world was on the brink of nuclear war.
* Kennedy promised to remove US missiles from Turkey
* 28 October Khrushchev removed the missiles and the crisis was over

1. **Results**

* Khrushchev seemed to have failed
* Kennedy became the hero of the Western world
* Telephone hot line set up between Moscow and Washington.
* (1963) – Nuclear test ban treaty signed.
* Nuclear Arms Race – long notes

The nuclear arms race was central to the [Cold War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/coldwar.htm). Many feared where the Cold War was going with the belief that the more nuclear weapons you had, the more powerful you were. Both [America](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/america_1918.htm) and [Russia](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1917_to_1939.htm) massively built up their stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

The world greatly changed when USA exploded the H-bomb in 1952. This one bomb was smaller in size than the Hiroshima atomic bomb but 2500 times more powerful. The Russians produced an H-bomb in 1953 and the world became a much more dangerous place.

However, it is possible that the sheer power of these weapons and the fear that they evoked, may have stopped a nuclear war.

USA produced a bomber - the B52 - thatcould fly 6,000 miles and deliver a nuclear pay-load. Such a development required massive financial backing from the government - something which America could afford to do and which Russia could not. Russia concentrated on producing bigger bombs - a far more cost effective procedure.

In October 1957, the world was introduced to the fear of a missile attack when Sputnikwas launched. This was to lead to ICBM’s :  Inter-continental ballistic missiles. As a result, America built the DEWline around the Artic - **D**efence and **E**arly **W**arning system.

At the end of the 1950’s, American Intelligence estimated that in a Russian missile attack, 20 million Americans would die and 22 million would be injured.

During the 1960’s, the Russians put their money into producing more missiles regardless of quality while America built fewer but better quality missiles - the Atlas could go 5,000 miles at a speed of 16,000 mph. By 1961, there were enough bombs to destroy the world.

Despite this, great emphasis was put on new weapon systems - mobile missile launchers were built, missiles were housed underground in silos and in 1960 the first Polaris submarine was launched carrying 16 nuclear missiles. Each missile carried four warheads which could targeted on different cities; hence one submarine effectively carried 64 nuclear warheads.

In 1967, China exploded an H-bomb. China was a communist country. In the west, NATO felt out-numbered as the table below shows and so had to place her faith in nuclear missiles.

**Troops** : NATO 2.6 million.  Warsaw Pact 4 million

**Tanks** : NATO 13,000.  Warsaw Pact  42,500

**Artillery** : NATO 10,750.  Warsaw Pact 31,5000

During the 1960’s the theory of **MAD** developed - **Mutually Assured Destruction**. This meant that if Russia attacked the west, the west would make sure that they would suitably retaliate  i.e. there would be no winners.

By 1981, USA had 8,000 ICBM’s and USSR 7,000 ICBM’s

By 1981, USA had 4,000 planes capable of delivering a nuclear bomb. Russia had 5000.

USA defence spending for 1981 = 178 billion dollars. By 1986, it was 367 billion dollars.

By 1986, it is estimated that throughout the world there were 40,000 nuclear warheads - the equivalent of one million Hiroshima bombs.

British Intelligence estimated that just one medium sized H-bomb on London would essentially destroy anything living up to 30 miles away.

Confronted by such awesome statistics, world leaders had to move to a position where they trusted each other more. Throughout the 1960's and 1970's "detente" had been used to ease bad relations between the superpowers. This was to culminate in the Reykjavik meeting between presidents Reagan and Gorbachev that started real progress in the cut in nuclear weaponry in future meetings (if little was actually gained at the meeting in Reykjavik).

Detente

Détente was a permanent relaxation in international affairs during the [Cold War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/coldwar.htm) rather than just a temporary relaxation (the so-called "thaw"). Detente is a term usually associated with the relations between [America](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/america_1918.htm), [Russia](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1917_to_1939.htm) and [China](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/china_1900_to_1976.htm).

The 1970’s witnessed detente. Why?

1) The horrors of [Vietnam](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/vietnam.htm) shocked people.

2) There was a growing fear of a nuclear holocaust especially with the growth in those countries that had [nuclear weapons](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/nuclear_arms_race.htm). Also both USA and USSR had huge stockpiles of weapons.

Why did all 3 major powers want to pursue detente ?

[China](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/china_1900_to_1976.htm) - she was fearful of her isolation in the world. She was also fearful of what USA had done in [Vietnam](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/vietnam.htm).  China’s stockpile of nuclear weapons was a lot smaller than that of USA. China was also worried by her worsening relations with USSR.

[USA](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/america_1918.htm) - she realised that there were better ways of containing communism than the ways that she done in previous years. She was also aware of the massive cost of weapons production and maintaining a huge armed force. A peaceful relationship with the USSR would be very beneficial to USA especially after the cost of the [Vietnam War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/vietnam.htm).

[USSR](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/russia_1917_to_1939.htm) - USSR was spending a huge amount on weapons at the expense of basic household goods. Living standards were poor and USSR was also aware that her relationship with China was far from good while USA was trying to improve hers with China.

How did the world's major powers attempt to ease world tension?

**USSR and USA**:

1963 - hot-line established after [Cuban Missile Crisis](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/cuba.htm)

                    1963 - both agreed to only use underground tests for nuclear explosions

1969 - Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) start

1972 - Richard Nixon, USA president, visited Moscow

1973 - Leonid Brezhnev, USSR leader, visited Washington

                    1974 - Nixon visited Moscow

1975 - Helsinki Agreement — USA, USSR, Canada + major European powers accept European frontiers set up after [World War Two](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/index.htm). This recognised that Germany was divided and East European countries agreed to allow their people human rights such as freedom of speech.

**China and USA**:

USA had backed the Chinese Nationalists in Taiwan since their fall in 1949  and had fought Communist China on behalf of the U.N. in the [Korean War](http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/korea.htm). In 1971 a move was made to improve relationships when China invited an American  table tennis team to China. Hence the term "ping—pong" diplomacy. USA’s response was to support China’s entry into the U.N., something she had always vetoed. In October 1971, China entered the U.N. Presidents Nixon and Ford both visited China though USA kept a massive naval fleet off of Taiwan. In December 1978, America's President Carter withdrew recognition of Taiwan.

**China and Russia**:

Relations between these two nations had soured in the late 1950’s over ideological matters. Both communist states accused the other of "revisionism", or moving away from pure communism. Both clashed over their borders and China has always asked for the return of land taken by the USSR in the C19. The territorial issue combined with the ideological issue has done little to ease problems between the two and both tried to develop better relationships with America than the other had.